

CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
OPENING STATEMENT FOR ENERGY MARK-UP
June 27, 2006

I want to welcome everyone here for this mark-up on the Science Committee's energy package, which has been skillfully assembled by our Energy Subcommittee chairman, Mrs. Biggert.

As I think everyone knows, having reliable, affordable, clean domestic sources of energy is a must if our nation is to remain safe and prosperous in the future. To do that, we must invest in a balanced portfolio of energy research and development (R&D) now so that we have a balanced portfolio of energy sources in the future. And at the same time we need to develop and promote ways to use those sources more wisely – an aspect of dealing with energy that once again will be conspicuously absent on the House floor this week.

As usual, this Committee is a model of what we should be doing. We've been working for weeks, negotiating on both sides of the aisle, to put forward a sensible comprehensive package that includes investments in clean coal, nuclear energy and a variety of renewable energy sources, as well as energy efficiency.

I'm going to highlight a few aspects of the bill and the manager's amendment now, so I don't need to say much later. We want to be done with this mark-up by noon.

The first several sections of the bill were originally introduced by Mrs. Biggert, and they are designed to embrace, build on, and guide the implementation of, the President's Advanced Energy Initiative.

The language on FutureGen, which supports the project and also aims to ensure that the taxpayers will get something for their investment, will be revised in the manager's amendment by language negotiated with Mr. Costello and the Energy and Commerce Committee.

On the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), the bill gives an amber light – embracing research, but requiring more analysis before large-scale demonstrations can proceed. The manager's amendment strips the language down to its bare essentials. This language will probably end up moving on the floor separately from the rest of this bill, but we thought it was important to put the Committee on record on this program.

The biofuels section emphasizes the need to develop feedstocks other than corn, and the manager's amendment includes language suggested by Mr. Calvert to ensure university participation.

The plug-in hybrid section began as a bill introduced by Mr. Smith, and he is to be applauded for bringing forward this sensible R&D and demonstration program. Plug-ins have the potential to significantly increase auto and light truck mileage, and those vehicles account for about 40 percent of annual U.S. oil consumption.

Mr. Smith also is responsible for the solar energy demonstration program in the bill, which would help increase the use of that renewable source. The manager's amendment includes language suggested by Ms. Johnson to encourage participation by minority institutions.

Mrs. Biggert introduced the green building design grants and the energy extension portions of the bill, both of which should improve energy efficiency. The manager's amendment includes extension language negotiated with Mr. Miller to make the program consistent with language this Committee included in last year's Energy Act.

Mr. McCaul, a very active freshman on this Committee, introduced the language on green building education. We need to be sure we are training engineers and architects not to unthinkingly build buildings the same old way, when buildings could be so much more energy efficient. The manager's amendment includes language from Ms. Jackson-Lee to encourage the participation of minority institutions.

Finally, the bill includes language to, in effect, send back to the National Academy of Sciences for further study the proposal to create an Advanced Research Projects Agency for Energy, or ARPA-E. We just don't think we know enough yet to determine whether an ARPA-E would contribute usefully to our energy future and, if so, how. The questions we raised at our hearing back in March remain unresolved after repeated meetings on the subject.

While ARPA-E is being studied, we will hardly be standing still with the programs in this bill and other efforts already under way. I urge support for the bill and the manager's amendment, which are models of balance and thoughtful policy.

Mr. Gordon.